

March 2003

ML sponsored blood drives help with increased need

by Katherine Gleason, AFRL Public Affairs

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — With military troops being deployed throughout the world, the United States Armed Forces are finding themselves with an increased need for blood.

Blood must be collected constantly to replace aging contingency supplies, and to meet the needs of the military health system. Every year, military hospitals transfuse more than 62,000 units of red cells, more than 20,000 units of plasma, and more than 30,000 units of platelets. A single trauma case can require 40 units of blood.

Two February blood drives hosted by the Air Force Research Laboratory's Materials and Manufacturing Directorate were a step in helping meet this need. The drives, held Feb. 12 and 26 netted 151 units of blood, which met their established goal. Seventy-three units were collected on the 12th, and 78 on the 26th.

"The numbers were very good," said Mary Shelly, environment, safety, and occupational health training program manager and unit blood coordinator. "The amount donated on each day was equivalent to what we usually get over a two-day period. The donor center has always been pleased with the turnout for our drives."

According to Marti Isherwood, Blood Donor Recruiter, drives such as these provide needed blood for the Armed Services Blood Program (ASBP).

"The military, unlike civilian agencies, can't simply go out into the community and host a blood drive," she said. "We have to establish involvement within the military community. The military has a great need for blood throughout the world, especially in forward contingency locations."

When the ASBP cannot meet its needs for blood and blood products, the military must purchase them from civilian agencies at approximately 250 dollars per unit.

"I'm a former medic, and I always took the blood supply for granted," said Isherwood. "Now, I realize the importance of reaching out and helping people understand why they should donate."



Deanna Freeman, 74th Medical Group Donor Center, prepares to draw blood from Fred Oliver, Air Force Research Laboratory Propulsions Directorate deputy director, during one of two blood drives hosted by the Materials and Manufacturing Directorate in February. (Courtesy photo)

Many people have questions about their eligibility to donate, or concerns about the safety of the process. The ASBP notes that individuals can donate blood every 56 days (eight weeks), and that the entire process takes about one hour. The basic eligibility guidelines are that you be at least 17 years of age, weigh 110 pounds, do not have a cold or other illness, and are a military beneficiary or federal government employee. Some additional guidelines were put into effect in 2001. For more information on donor eligibility, please contact the Donor Center at (937) 257-0580 or (937) 257-9364.

The process is very safe, with new, sterile needles used for each donation. Also, your body will replace blood volume or plasma lost within 24 hours, and red blood cells within four to eight weeks.

Additional AFRL blood drives are being held on May 14 and 28, Aug. 13 and 27, and Nov. 12 and 26. However, Shelly commented that interested donors can give at anytime by making an appointment with the Donor Center. Additionally, for Wright-Patterson Armed Services blood drive information,

continued on page 2

continued from page 1

or if your organization would like to schedule a blood drive, contact Isherwood at (937) 257-1038, or marti.isherwood@wpafb.af.mil.

The Military Blood Program was established in 1952 by Presidential Order as part of the National Blood Program. The ASBP currently operates at 151 locations throughout the world, including 81 blood banks and donor centers. The program maintains 65,000 units of frozen blood and 5000 units of liquid cells at all times to meet readiness requirements.

More than 800 military and civilian personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy are a part of this program, which helps provide blood products and services to the military community in both peacetime and war. For more information, visit www.tricare.osd.mil/asbpo. @